

Frequently Asked Questions about
Michigan's State School Reform/Redesign Office

Priority Schools

1. What is a Priority school?

Priority schools are those schools in the bottom 5% of a complete top-to-bottom (TTB) list of schools. This placement is often indicative of minimal student outcomes in a number of subject areas over time, poor achievement coupled with declines in student performance or substantial achievement gaps, or all of these factors. Schools carry the Priority School status designation for four years regardless of progress.

2. What does it mean to be a Priority school?

Priority schools are required to develop and implement a reform/redesign plan based on one of four intervention models, as a means for rapid turnaround in student achievement. These schools are given a number of supports from ISDs, MDE and the SRO to result in rapid turnaround.

3. Why do we have a Priority school list? Is it required by legislation?

Yes, the Priority school list (bottom 5% of schools on the TTB ranking) is mandated in MCL 380.1280c.

4. How were Priority schools identified?

Schools identified in the bottom 5% of the TTB list are Priority Schools. This includes a school that was identified as a Persistently Low Achieving (PLA) school in 2010 or 2011 (i.e. all previous PLA schools are classified as Priority schools while they are developing or implementing a reform plan per their original placement on the PLA list. Schools stay in this category for four years.)

5. What are the components of the Top-to-Bottom rankings?

The calculation methodology and supporting information are explained in detail in documents on the MDE's website (www.mi.gov/ttb). In summary, the TTB ranking uses achievement scores (scale scores converted to z-scores, not proficiency rates); improvement scores based on student level two-year performance level change for students in grades 3-8, and cohort slopes of scores at the high school level; and achievement gaps. Up to five subject areas are included (math, reading, writing, science, and social studies), and these are averaged together to determine an overall standardized score for a school. For schools with a 12th grade, graduation rate is included into the overall score along with these subject areas. In short, the three main categories for the TTB are below:

- **Achievement** in each of the five tested areas (math, reading, writing, science and social studies)
- **Improvement** in each of the tested areas, and
- **Achievement gap** in each tested area.

(Note: Different metrics may be used in future iterations of the TTB methodology)

6. Are all schools included in the list?

Any school that has at least 30 Full Academic Year (FAY) students in each of the last two years in at least two tested content areas is ranked. Students are included for accountability purposes in a school's results only if they were FAY students—as determined by pupil count days.

7. What are the intervention models that a Priority school can select for the reform plan?

Schools can select from one of the four following intervention models identified by the U.S. Department of Education. These are specifically mentioned in legislation.

a. Transformation Model

- i. Developing teacher and school leader effectiveness, which includes ensuring that the school has a principal with school turnaround competencies;
- ii. Implementing comprehensive instructional reform strategies;
- iii. Extending or repurposing time for instruction and teacher planning time and creating community-oriented schools; and
- iv. Providing operational flexibility and sustained support.

b. Turnaround Model

- i. This would address similar issues to those mentioned above in the transformation model, and include other actions such as:
- ii. Ensure the school has a principal with demonstrated school turnaround competencies and replace at least 50 percent of the school's staff;
- iii. Adopting a new governance structure; and
- iv. Implementing a new or revised instructional program.

c. Restart Model

- i. Districts would close the school and reopen it under the management of a charter school operator, charter management organization, or educational management organization selected through a rigorous review process. A restart school would be required to enroll, within the grades it serves, any former student who wishes to attend.

d. Closure Model

- i. Districts would close the low-achieving school and enroll the students who attended that school in other high-achieving schools in the district.

8. Who submits the plan and when does the plan have to be submitted?

According to 1280(c)(2), within 90 days after a public school is placed under the supervision of the state school reform/redesign officer, the school board or board of directors operating the public school shall submit a redesign plan to the state school reform/redesign officer. According to 1280(c)(3), the SRO officer shall issue an order approving, disapproving, or making changes to the redesign plan. If the order makes changes to the redesign plan, the school board or board of directors has 30 days after the order to change the redesign plan to incorporate those changes into the redesign plan and resubmit it. Once a plan is approved, a school can request a change in the plan at any point.

9. What supports are available for Priority schools?

Priority schools receive a wide variety of supports to assist with the development and implementation of the reform plan. The range of services and supports varies depending on the Title I status of the school, and the number of years the school is identified as a Priority school including the following:

The MDE's supports from its Office of Education Innovation and Improvement (OEII) include, but are not limited to the following:

- Access to online professional learning resources specific to school turnaround and improvement,
- Participation in technical assistance professional learning events and conferences, including networking meetings, leadership academies, and targeted resources,
- Access to the Surveys of Enacted Curriculum for all core teachers in the school,
- Participation in the Superintendent's Dropout Challenge,
- Access to data tools and supports to analyze progress,
- Access to district resources such as the District Toolkit and Educational Resource Survey

The MDE's supports/requirements from its Office of Field Services (OFS) include, but are not limited to the following for Title I eligible Priority Schools:

- An Intervention Specialist (IS), who can facilitate various aspects of plan development, as well as provide technical assistance using customized data tools provided to the school,
- Access to the Statewide System of Support, which includes supports from OEII and ISDs, including School Improvement Facilitators (SIFs), to help guide instructional and school-wide components of the reform plan,
- Data packets on school achievement outcomes, demographics, and other data resources to support the school in consideration of the various reform efforts,
- Access to Title I specific events such as networking meetings and the School Improvement Conference.

The DTMB's supports from its State School Reform/Redesign Office (SRO) include, but are not limited to the following:

- Access to training relative to standards in a cohesive and easily accessible format to target and customize the individual unique needs of each Priority School. The SRO's formatting helps superintendents, school leaders and teachers engage in practices that determine which standards were taught and which students have mastered those standards.
- Streamlined superintendent-led communication and involvement for established expectations, transparency and clarity.
- Real-time school-wide, student-level data every 6-to-8 weeks to target core challenges in time for midcourse corrections with customized supports for individual students in a variety of data collection categories not collected by any other state agency.
- Response to Intervention (RtI) and Special Education tools and trainings to address gaps and immediate supports for students in Tiers I, II, and III.
- Access to national practices in Massachusetts and Tennessee that have shaped school reform.

Priority School Status Release, the SSRRD, and Exit Criteria

10. How does a Priority School exit Priority status?

To exit Priority School status, the Top-to-Bottom ranking must be above 5%, ninety-five percent of students must participate in the statewide test, and the school must meet all Annual Measurable Objectives/academic targets in the all students categories.

11. What is the SSRRD?

According to 380.1280(c)(6), the state school reform/redesign school district is created. The state school reform/redesign school district is a school district reserved as one of many last resort options for chronically failing schools. To date, the SRO has not placed any schools in the SSRRD. The Education Achievement Authority (EAA) was originally designed to be the state's school reform district but lost its exclusivity rights under the former superintendent of public instruction.

12. Does the state have other options besides placing a school in the SSRRD if the school fails to make satisfactory progress?

Yes, the law allows the SRO to place a Priority school under the management of a CEO if the SRO determines that "better educational results are likely to be achieved" under this model. The CEO must implement one of the four intervention models.

General Question & Answers

13. What has the SRO been doing since the E.O. took effect in May?

- a. Planned and executed release-retention protocol for eligible schools identified in cohort 2011
- b. Launched new informative website to increase access to knowledge of national reform efforts and local state Priority School processes with data
- c. Implemented performance information system
- d. Compiled reform learnings from Massachusetts and Tennessee trips
- e. Met with superintendents and their teams regarding current status and next steps
- f. Wrote business plan and SSRRD operations
- g. Successfully transitioned to DTMB, Romney building
- h. Built curricular and RTI (response to intervention) system tools for districts' free and full access
- i. Submitted budget and academic plans to Governor
- j. Collaborated with ISDs to support long-term reforms
- k. Reconstituted team to diversify expertise in urban education, RTI, curriculum, technology, data, community, and charters schools
- l. Collected data related to Priority Schools' trajectories (i.e. student proficiency and growth data, specific circumstances at the school, and other factors).

THE REVISED SCHOOL CODE (EXCERPT)
Act 451 of 1976

380.1280c Identification of lowest achieving 5% of public schools; list; placement under supervision of reform/redesign officer; submission of redesign plan; implementation; creation of state school reform/redesign school district; appointment of chief executive officer to control multiple schools; implementation of restart, turnaround, or transformation models; release of public school from measures imposed by subsection (6) or (7); report; posting of certain information; issuance of order placing school under supervision of state school reform/redesign officer; prohibition.

Sec. 1280c. (1) Beginning in 2010, not later than September 1 of each year, the superintendent of public instruction shall publish a list identifying the public schools in this state that the department has determined to be among the lowest achieving 5% of all public schools in this state, as defined for the purposes of the federal incentive grant program created under sections 14005 and 14006 of title XIV of the American recovery and reinvestment act of 2009, Public Law 111-5.

(2) Except as otherwise provided in subsection (16), the superintendent of public instruction shall issue an order placing each public school that is included on the list under subsection (1) under the supervision of the state school reform/redesign officer described in subsection (9). Within 90 days after a public school is placed under the supervision of the state school reform/redesign officer under this section, the school board or board of directors operating the public school shall submit a redesign plan to the state school reform/redesign officer. For a public school operated by a school board, the redesign plan shall be developed with input from the local teacher bargaining unit and the local superintendent. The redesign plan shall require implementation of 1 of the 4 school intervention models that are provided for the lowest achieving schools under the federal incentive grant program created under sections 14005 and 14006 of title XIV of the American recovery and reinvestment act of 2009, Public Law 111-5, known as the "race to the top" grant program. These models are the turnaround model, restart model, school closure, and transformation model. The redesign plan shall include an executed addendum to each applicable collective bargaining agreement in effect for the public school that meets the requirements of subsection (8).

(3) Within 30 days after receipt of a redesign plan for a public school under subsection (2), the state school reform/redesign officer shall issue an order approving, disapproving, or making changes to the redesign plan. If the order makes changes to the redesign plan, the school board or board of directors has 30 days after the order to change the redesign plan to incorporate those changes into the redesign plan and resubmit it to the state school reform/redesign officer for approval or disapproval.

(4) The state school reform/redesign officer shall not disapprove a redesign plan that includes all of the elements required under federal law for the school intervention model included in the redesign plan. A school board or board of directors may appeal disapproval of a redesign plan on this basis to the superintendent of public instruction. The decision of the superintendent of public instruction on the appeal is final.

(5) If the state school reform/redesign officer approves a redesign plan under this section, the school board or board of directors shall implement the redesign plan for the public school beginning with the beginning of the next school year that begins after the approval. The school board or board of directors shall regularly submit monitoring reports to the state school reform/redesign officer on the implementation and results of the plan in the form and manner, and according to a schedule, as determined by the state school reform/redesign officer.

(6) The state school reform/redesign school district is created. The state school reform/redesign school district is a school district for the purposes of section 11 of article IX of the state constitution of 1963 and for receiving state school aid under the state school aid act of 1979 and is subject to the leadership and general supervision of the state board over all public education under section 3 of article VIII of the state constitution of 1963. The state school reform/redesign school district is a body corporate and is a governmental agency. Except as otherwise provided in subsection (7), if the state school reform/redesign officer does not approve the redesign plan, or if the state school reform/redesign officer determines that the redesign plan is not achieving satisfactory results, the state school reform/redesign officer shall issue an order placing the public school in the state school reform/redesign school district, imposing for the public school implementation of 1 of the 4 school intervention models described in subsection (2) beginning with the beginning of the next school year, and imposing an addendum to each applicable collective bargaining agreement in effect for the public school as necessary to implement the school intervention model and that meets the requirements of subsection (8). All of the following apply to the state school reform/redesign school district:

(a) The state school reform/redesign school district shall consist of schools that are placed in the state

school reform/redesign school district.

(b) The state school reform/redesign officer shall act as the superintendent of the state school reform/redesign school district. With respect to schools placed in the state school reform/redesign school district, the state school reform/redesign officer has all of the powers and duties described in this section; all of the provisions of this act that would otherwise apply to the school board that previously operated a school placed in the state school reform/redesign school district apply to the state school reform/redesign officer with respect to that school, except those relating to taxation or borrowing; except as otherwise provided in this section, the state school reform/redesign officer may exercise all the powers and duties otherwise vested by law in the school board that previously operated a school placed in the state school reform/redesign school district and in its officers, except those relating to taxation or borrowing, and may exercise all additional powers and duties provided under this section; and, except as otherwise provided in this section, the state school reform/redesign officer accedes to all the rights, duties, and obligations of the school board with respect to that school. These powers, rights, duties, and obligations include, but are not limited to, all of the following:

(i) Authority over the expenditure of all funds attributable to pupils at that school, including that portion of proceeds from bonded indebtedness and other funds dedicated to capital projects that would otherwise be apportioned to that school by the school board that previously operated the school according to the terms of the bond issue or financing documents.

(ii) Subject to subsection (8), rights and obligations under collective bargaining agreements and employment contracts entered into by the school board for employees at the school.

(iii) Rights to prosecute and defend litigation.

(iv) Rights and obligations under statute, rule, and common law.

(v) Authority to delegate any of the state school reform/redesign officer's powers and duties to 1 or more designees, with proper supervision by the state school reform/redesign officer.

(vi) Power to terminate any contract or portion of a contract entered into by the school board that applies to that school. However, this subsection does not allow any termination or diminishment of obligations to pay debt service on legally authorized bonds and does not allow a collective bargaining agreement to be affected except as provided under subsection (8). A contract terminated by the state school reform/redesign officer under this subsection is void.

(7) If the state school reform/redesign officer determines that better educational results are likely to be achieved by appointing a chief executive officer to take control of multiple public schools, the state school reform/redesign officer may make a recommendation to the superintendent of public instruction for appointment of a chief executive officer to take control over those multiple schools. If the superintendent of public instruction appoints a chief executive officer to take control of multiple public schools under this subsection, the chief executive officer shall impose for those public schools implementation of 1 of the 4 school intervention models described in subsection (2) and impose an addendum to each applicable collective bargaining agreement in effect for those public schools as necessary to implement the school intervention model and that meets the requirements of subsection (8). With respect to those public schools, the chief executive officer has all of the same powers and duties that the state school reform/redesign officer has for public schools placed in the state school reform/redesign school district under subsection (6). The chief executive officer shall regularly submit monitoring reports to the state school reform/redesign officer on the implementation and results of the intervention model in the form and manner, and according to a schedule, as determined by the state school reform/redesign officer. The chief executive officer shall exercise any other powers or duties over the public schools as may be directed by the superintendent of public instruction.

(8) An addendum to a collective bargaining agreement under this section shall provide for any of the following that are necessary for the applicable school intervention model to be implemented at each affected public school:

(a) That any contractual or other seniority system that would otherwise be applicable shall not apply at the public school. This subdivision does not allow unilateral changes in pay scales or benefits.

(b) That any contractual or other work rules that are impediments to implementing the redesign plan shall not apply at the public school. This subdivision does not allow unilateral changes in pay scales or benefits.

(c) That the state school reform/redesign officer shall direct the expenditure of all funds attributable to pupils at the public school and the principal or other school leader designated by the state school reform/redesign officer shall have full autonomy and control over curriculum and discretionary spending at the public school.

(9) The superintendent of public instruction shall hire a state school reform/redesign officer to carry out the functions under this section and as otherwise prescribed by law. The state school reform/redesign officer shall be chosen solely on the basis of his or her competence and experience in educational reform and redesign.

The state school reform/redesign officer is exempt from civil service. The state school reform/redesign officer is responsible directly to the superintendent of public instruction to ensure that the purposes of this section are carried out, and accordingly the position of state school reform/redesign officer should be a position within the department that is exempt from the classified state civil service. The department shall request that the civil service commission establish the position of state school reform/redesign officer as a position that is exempt from the classified state civil service.

(10) If the state school reform/redesign officer imposes the restart model for a public school in the state school reform/redesign school district, or a chief executive officer under subsection (7) imposes the restart model for multiple public schools under that subsection, all of the following apply:

(a) The state school reform/redesign officer or chief executive officer shall enter into an agreement with an educational management organization to manage and operate the public school or schools. The state school reform/redesign officer or chief executive officer shall provide sufficient oversight to ensure that the public school or schools will be operated according to all of the requirements for a restart model.

(b) There shall be considered to be no collective bargaining agreement in effect that applies to employees working at the public school or schools under this model at the time of imposition of the model.

(11) If the state school reform/redesign officer imposes the turnaround model for a public school in the state school reform/redesign school district, or a chief executive officer under subsection (7) imposes the turnaround model for multiple public schools under that subsection, all of the following apply:

(a) A collective bargaining agreement that applies to employees working at the public school or schools under this model at the time of imposition of the model, and any successor collective bargaining agreement, continues to apply with respect to pay scales and benefits.

(b) Subject to any addendum to the collective bargaining agreement that applies to the public school or schools, an employee who is working at the public school or schools and who was previously employed in the same school district that previously operated that school shall continue to retain and accrue seniority rights in that school district according to the collective bargaining agreement that applies to employees of that school district.

(12) If more than 9 public schools operated by a school district are on the list under subsection (1), the transformation model may not be implemented for more than 50% of those schools.

(13) If the state school reform/redesign officer determines that a public school that is subject to the measures under subsection (6) or (7) has made significant improvement in pupil achievement and should be released from the measures that have been imposed under subsection (6) or (7), the state school reform/redesign officer may recommend this to the superintendent of public instruction. If the superintendent of public instruction agrees with the determination and recommendation, the superintendent of public instruction may release the public school from the measures that have been imposed under subsection (6) or (7).

(14) At least annually, the state school reform/redesign officer shall submit a report to the standing committees of the senate and house of representatives having jurisdiction over education legislation on the progress being made in improving pupil proficiency due to the measures under this section.

(15) As soon as practicable after the federal department of education has adopted the final work rules and formula for identifying the lowest achieving 5% of all public schools in this state for the purposes of the federal incentive grant program created under sections 14005 and 14006 of title XIV of the American recovery and reinvestment act of 2009, Public Law 111-5, known as the "race to the top" grant program, the department shall post all of the following on its website:

(a) The federal work rules and formula.

(b) A list of the public schools in this state that have been identified for these purposes as being among the lowest achieving 5% of all public schools in this state. The department shall update this list as it considers appropriate.

(16) If a school that is included on the list under subsection (1) is operated by a school district in which an emergency manager is in place under the local government and school district fiscal accountability act, then the superintendent of public instruction shall not issue an order placing the school under the supervision of the state school reform/redesign officer.

History: Add. 2009, Act 204, Imd. Eff. Jan. 4, 2010;—Am. 2011, Act 8, Imd. Eff. Mar. 16, 2011.

Popular name: Act 451

